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Hundreds of Liverpool university students caught trying to cheat their way to success

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Generic picture of a student

HUNDREDS of Merseyside university students were caught trying to cheat their way to degree success.

An ECHO investigation over just two academic years found the catalogue of cheating included using mobile phones, copying chunks of text from websites such as Wikipedia – and even stealing examination answers.

Today university bosses warned would-be cheats they would continue to use the latest technology to weed them out.

Student union officials said our probe was proof of the pressure students were under to succeed amid the rising costs of university study.

Figures released to the ECHO under the Freedom of Information Act show 32 University of Liverpool students were caught breaking strict exam rules between May 2011 and 2012.

An engineering student was given a formal reprimand for “the removal of an answer book from an examination room”.

Two students were spotted cheating by trying to get answers from others sitting exams while another was caught foolishly trying to help another candidate.

The majority of offenders were caught bringing in unauthorised material including mobile phones to help them in the exam hall.

Punishments ranged from being ordered to resit and having studies suspended for a year to, in the case of two students, having their studies terminated.

And between October 29, 2010 and the end of June this year another 636 cases of plagiarising (using and passing off other people's work as your own) and colluding in coursework were exposed.

Punishments ranged from written warnings to refusing to award degrees in cases where students committed three acts of major plagiarism.

Universities now use cheat-busting technology which electronically screens coursework.

And many of the culprits were found to have tried to pass off work copied from the web as their own – with as much as 93% of content lifted from the internet.

One “conscientious student” faced with serious health issues cheated in a bid to write the “perfect essay”. After being found out the student chose to leave.

Today the University of Liverpool said determining incidents of plagiarism was a matter of academic judgement but a spokesman stressed: “We take incidents of plagiarism very seriously, penalising students where allegations are proven.”

Students are given advice and encouraged to run their work through detection software to see if they have inadvertently lifted work prior to submission of coursework.

Staff also use the software “to detect possible instances of plagiarism in students’ work and as part of the evaluation process to determine whether or not an offence has been committed”.

Cheating was also exposed at Liverpool John Moores University which investigated 227 allegations in the 2010/11 academic year ranging from outright cheating to plagiarism and collusion – with 183 cases proven and two students ejected.

Hope University snared 116 cheats between 2010 and 2012 with eight students thrown out.

And since the 2010/11 academic year and July this year Ormskirk's Edge Hill University uncovered 219 cases of “academic malpractice” which resulted in 25 students withdrawing from their studies.

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